



# The Center for Women

## Obstetrics & Gynecology

J. Harley Barrow, Jr., M.D. – Amanda G. Thornton, A.P.N.

### *Questions & Answers regarding Pregnancy*

#### **What do you do if you have been exposed to Fifth Disease?**

Come into the office for a blood draw to perform lab tests to see if you've been affected. This needs to be done within 2 weeks of exposure.

#### **What can I do for nausea during pregnancy?**

Avoid sudden movements, get out of bed slowly then sit for a few moments before standing, eat dry toast or crackers, try having 5 small meals a day instead of 3 big ones, get plenty of rest and avoid unpleasant smells. Certain vitamins may contain extra vitamins and/or ginger to assist in nausea as well.

#### **Can I dye my hair during pregnancy?**

Yes.

#### **Can I have sex during pregnancy?**

You can have sex as long as it is comfortable for you. If you experience any abnormal feelings or bleeding, please stop and contact your physician. It's generally okay to have sex while you are pregnant. Call your physician immediately if you begin having bleeding or contractions, feel pain during sex, or think your bag of waters have broken. If you have a history of miscarriage or preterm labor, ask your physician for advice.

#### **Can I exercise during pregnancy?**

You can work out as you normally do, stay hydrated but do not lift more than 25 pounds. Once you are 24 weeks you need to start limiting your high impact exercises. Be sure to talk to your physician before starting or continuing an exercise program. Exercise during pregnancy has many benefits and there are a variety to do that are safe. But you need to make sure you get plenty of rest (at least 7-9 hours each night). It is also important to know your limits.

Exercise can help you have more energy, tone muscles needed for delivery, improve your posture, strengthen your heart and lungs, lower stress and prevent excess weight gain. You can do brisk walking, swimming, biking (wear safety gear), take an exercise or yoga class. Avoid activities where the risk of hurting your belly or falling is high.

If you aren't used to regular exercise, start slowly. If you exercised regularly before pregnancy you may need to adjust your routine to accommodate the changes.

Stop exercising and call your physician right away if you feel pain, have vaginal bleeding or discharge, feel dizzy or faint, feel short of breath, have an irregular heart rate or if your heart beats very fast, have trouble walking, have back or pelvic pain, or notice any other unusual symptoms.

#### **What special exercise are good for pregnancy?**

Pelvic floor exercises can help strengthen the muscles around the vagina and pelvis. The pelvic floor muscles support the baby, uterus and abdominal organs. Kegel exercises is what help these muscles.

Breathing exercises can help you relax and be very helpful during labor, especially if they become habitual.

Stretching can relieve leg cramps and backaches. Stretching can also help tone muscles. Stretches would include bends (back muscles), trunk twists (stomach and back muscles) and calf stretches. You need to make sure your physician shows you the proper technique before starting stretches.

#### **Can you lie in a tanning bed if you are pregnant?**

You can lay in a tanning bed as long as your core body temperature does not increase.



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### Q&A for Pregnancy Continued

#### **Who would be the pediatrician at the time the baby is born?**

The mother selects a pediatrician prior to the delivery time. This physician will be contacted at the time of the admission for delivery. The choices of pediatricians and family physician that will follow the care of the baby is completely up to the mother.

#### **Is it common to spot in pregnancy?**

Yes, primarily if you have been sexually active within the last 72 hours. However, if it is accompanied with pain or the bleeding is heavy enough to soak a pad you should call or go to the local Emergency Room.

#### **Is it normal to have cramping in pregnancy?**

Yes, some cramping is normal due to the uterus growing, however if the cramping is persistent or accompanied with bleeding you should call or go to the nearest Emergency Room.

#### **What can I do for backaches during pregnancy?**

Wear low-heeled shoes, use good posture, don't lift heavy objects, and avoid standing or sitting for long periods.

#### **What is a Quad Screen Test?**

This is a blood test that measures levels of substances produced by the fetus. They are used to check for certain birth defects.

#### **What is an amniocentesis?**

This test takes a sample of the fluid that surrounds the baby. It is used to look for genetic disorders. It may also be used to check how well the baby's lungs are developing. In most cases, the test is performed between the 15<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> weeks of pregnancy.

#### **Why would I need a blood sugar screening?**

This is usually given around the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy. It checks for signs of gestational diabetes (diabetes developed during pregnancy). It usually goes away after giving birth. Special care may need to be taken during pregnancy and birth though.

#### **What are some miscarriage warning signs to be aware of?**

Belly cramps or pain, vaginal bleeding, passing blood clots or whitish or grayish tissue and the baby moving less would be possible warning signs for a miscarriage. \*\*IF you notice any of these symptoms, you should contact your doctor right away for proper evaluation and treatment.

#### **What are some premature labor signs to be aware of?**

Preterm or premature labor happens when a woman goes into labor 3 or more weeks before her due date. Preterm labor can be dangerous for you and your baby. Signs include having contractions that occur 4-6 times or more in 1 hour; belly cramps; a low, dull backache; an increase in vaginal discharge, or any unusual discharge; or if your bag of waters break.

#### **What other symptoms would need immediate attention?**

Excessive vomiting, severe headache, dizziness or blurred vision, chills and/or fever, swelling of the face, hands, feet or ankles, or sudden weight gain. If you have diabetes, high blood pressure or any other health conditions, there may be special precautions on top of these listed.

#### **Can an STD (Sexually Transmitted Disease) be passed to the baby at birth?**

Mothers can pass certain STDs to their babies during the birth and sometimes during the pregnancy or through breastfeeding. These can include but are not limited to HIV, the virus that causes aids.

#### **What STDs can lead to problems in a pregnancy?**

Early detection can lead to proper treatment which can help prevent you and your baby from getting sick. It could even save your baby's life. The following can be tested for: hepatitis B, HIV, syphilis, herpes, gonorrhea, chlamydia, genital warts, trichomoniasis and many other STDs. If at all possible, these need to be tested prior to becoming pregnant but can be tested for once you become pregnant.



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### Q&A for Pregnancy Continued

#### **Where can I get more Folate besides taking Vitamins?**

Folate helps lower the risk of certain birth defects. It is best to make sure you get enough folate starting months before pregnancy for the best outcome. Good sources of folate (folic acid) would be through leafy green vegetables, dry beans, citrus fruits, and through whole-grain breads/cereals.

#### **Where can I get more Calcium besides taking vitamins?**

Calcium helps build strong bones and teeth. Good sources include: milk, yogurt, cheese, dark-green leafy vegetables such as broccoli, and blackstrap molasses.

#### **Where can I get more Iron besides taking vitamins?**

Iron helps the body make blood and also helps your baby grow. Good sources include: red meat, dry beans, leafy green vegetables, dried fruits, and iron-fortified cereals.

#### **What can I do for leg swelling or varicose veins?**

Keep your legs raised when you sit or lie down, try not to sit, stand or cross our legs for long periods, and avoid tight clothing.

#### **What can I do for hemorrhoids or constipation?**

Eat plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain products, drink more water, and try to get some exercise or move around (brisk walks, etc.)

#### **What can I do for indigestion (heartburn)?**

Avoid greasy or spicy foods, try having 5 small meals a day instead of 3 big ones, avoid eating just before bedtime, and avoid lying down soon after you eat.

#### **What can I do for shortness of breath?**

Raise your arms over your head, avoid lying flat on your back, sit up straight, and rest when you start to feel tired.

#### **What are some other hazards pregnant women should watch out for?**

X-rays can slow your baby's growth and cause other problems.

Workplace, household and garden chemicals that are easily breathed in are especially dangerous which would include fumes from paint, cleaning fluids and varnish.

Lead can be breathed in or swallowed, which can be found in lead paint, lead crystal, tap water and certain traditional remedies.

Soiled cat litter that had cat feces can spread a disease which can cause birth defects. You would want to avoid changing the litter box during pregnancy.

Rodents can also spread a disease that may cause defects. Rodents include mice, rats and hamsters.

Hot tubs and saunas have excessive heat that can damage your baby's growing brain and spinal cord.

Family violence, especially physical abuse can harm you and your baby.

#### **Do I have to have an episiotomy?**

An episiotomy is a cut made in the tissue between the vagina and rectum. It can help the baby fit through without tearing the mother's skin and muscles. It may be needed if the baby needs to come out quickly, for example. The area is numbed before the ut is made under normal circumstances.



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#### When would a cesarean birth be necessary?

When the labor is not going well; when the baby's position makes a vaginal birth too dangerous; if the mother never dilates or dilates fully; if the mother has had previous cesareans for complications and when there are other high-risks conditions to warrant a cesarean. Most women can leave the hospital 2-5 days after a cesarean birth.

#### What are the warning signs of Pregnancy-Induced Hypertension?

There are signs and symptoms that are sometimes linked to high blood pressure in pregnancy. Some of those would be:

- Sudden weight gain of more than 1 pound a day;
- Edema (swelling) of the face and hands;
- Severe or constant headaches;
- Blurred vision or spots in front of the eyes; or
- Pain in the upper right part of the abdomen.

If you notice any of these symptoms, you should contact your doctor right away for proper evaluation and treatment.

#### What is the difference in Braxton Hicks versus True Labor?

##### **Braxton Hicks**

- Irregular in intensity
- Infrequent
- Unpredictable
- Non-rhythmic
- More uncomfortable than painful (although some women Braxton Hicks can feel painful)
- They do not increase in intensity, or frequency
- They taper off and then disappear altogether

##### **True Labor**

- Contractions every 10 minutes or more than 5 contractions in an hour
- Regular tightening or pain in your back or lower abdomen
- Increasing pressure in the pelvic or vagina
- Menstrual-like cramps
- Bleeding
- Fluid leak
- Flu-like symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea

If you notice any of the True Labor signs and symptoms, please go to Labor & Delivery immediately to be evaluated. Many women report more than once and are told they are Braxton Hicks but we would rather you be safely evaluated if you are unsure of the signs and symptoms.